

Uniting for Mental Health

Louisiana 988 Helpline Communication Toolkit



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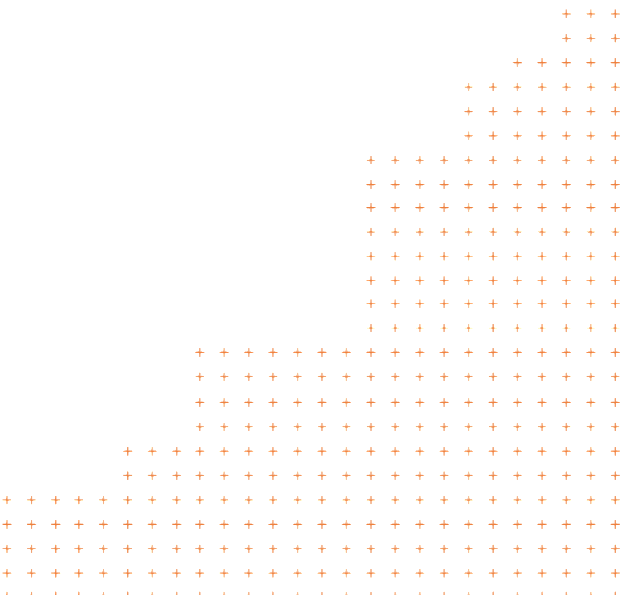
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About 988

In 2022, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) launched the Louisiana 988 helpline to make it easier for residents to get the immediate emotional support they need when they need it.

988 replaces the 10-digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. It was established nationally to improve access to support services and address our country's growing suicide and mental health-related care needs. 988 offers easier access to the helpline network and related resources, distinct from the public safety focus of 911, which is primarily for dispatching emergency medical, fire and police services.

Studies show the helpline works—most people who call the helpline report feeling significantly less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a specialist.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), almost 98% of people who call, chat or text 988 get the support they need and do not require additional services at that moment.

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH)/Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) has contracted with two certified call centers in Louisiana to respond to 988 calls, chats and texts from Louisiana residents statewide. Both centers are certified by Vibrant Emotional Health, the federal 988 administrator, and must meet Vibrant's national standards as well as the requirements of a national accrediting agency.

LDH/OBH is committed to ensuring everyone in Louisiana has access to quality emotional and mental health support—whether they're experiencing issues around anxiety, depression, alcohol or drugs, thoughts of suicide, or anything in between.

988 is here to help.

Key Statistics & Messaging

Communicating on sensitive topics such as suicide, mental health or emotional distress can be challenging. To support your efforts, LDH/OBH is providing the most up-to-date state and national statistics, along with key messages about the Louisiana 988 helpline. Consistent, clear communication is essential in addressing community concerns, particularly regarding why these topics matter and what to expect when they seek help.

Key Statistics

- + 1 in 5 adults live with a mental health condition.¹
- + In 2023, 856,000 youth and 1.5 million adults attempted suicide.²
- + In 2023, 49,316 Americans died by suicide.²
- + In 2023, one death by suicide occurred every 11 minutes in the U.S.²
- + In 2023, suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in Louisiana.³
- + Suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death for Louisianans ages 10-24 (9.7 per 100,000) and 25-34 (22.2 per 100,000).³
- + In Louisiana, 691 people died by suicide in 2023.⁴

Key Messages

- + Too many of us are experiencing mental health-related distress without the support and care we need. 988 is here anytime, day or night, to listen and help.
- + 988 specialists are ready to help whether you're feeling overwhelmed, having thoughts of suicide, or have concerns about gambling, alcohol, or drug use. No issue is too small – reach out any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- + 988 specialists can connect you to local resources like housing, financial assistance, mental health services and gambling, drug, or alcohol recovery services. 988 is always within reach, with specialists ready to listen day or night.
- + All of us need help sometimes. Being human means helping others – and reaching out to help ourselves. Call or text 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org – it's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

¹ National Institute of Mental Health, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

² Drapeau, C. W., & McIntosh, J. L. (2025). U.S.A. suicide: 2023 Official final data. Washington, DC: National Council for Suicide Prevention (NCSP), dated January 14, 2025, downloaded from [<https://www.thencsp.org/suicidestatistics>]

³ CDC's WONDER website, <http://wonder.cdc.gov>

⁴ Louisiana Vital Records Internal Report

Key Terminology

Research conducted to understand how people think and talk about behavioral health shows preferences for certain language related to the topic. Recommendations based on those findings are detailed in the chart below.

Use this:	Instead of this:	Because:
Helpline	Hotline or crisis line	“Hotline” feels like it will be staffed by volunteers; “crisis” feels like things have to be out of control to call
Safe, supportive, confidential	N/A	This helps to de-stigmatize help-seeking
Everyone needs help	N/A	This helps to de-stigmatize help-seeking
Brave and courageous	N/A	This helps to de-stigmatize help-seeking
Hope, resilience, “it gets better”	Struggle	“Hope” is motivating whereas “struggle” feels diminishing
Emergency	Crisis	“Emergency” feels solvable and like something that could happen to anyone; “crisis” feels out of control and like an elevated level of need that some people do not identify with
988 specialists	Trained crisis counselor	“Trained” feels like someone with little experience
Plain language like “depression or anxiety” and “drugs or alcohol”	Mental health, behavioral health or substance use	People can relate better to more concrete terms; the more technical terms evoke more stigma
Immediate	Fast	“Fast” feels like care might be rushed

Avoid using stigmatizing or misleading language when reporting on suicide. Phrases like “committed suicide” or referring to a suicide as “successful,” “unsuccessful,” or a “failed attempt” can perpetuate harmful myths and undermine prevention efforts. Instead, use nonjudgmental terms such as “died by suicide” or “took their own life” or “suicide attempt survivor.”

For more guidance, visit reportingonsuicide.org.

Digital and Social Media Posts & Assets

Post 1 (image)



988 counselors can provide safe, emotional support for communities of color. Just call or text “988,” or chat at louisiana988.org anytime. Our counselors will listen, treat you with dignity, and help you work through whatever you’re dealing with. It’s free, confidential, and here for you, 24/7.

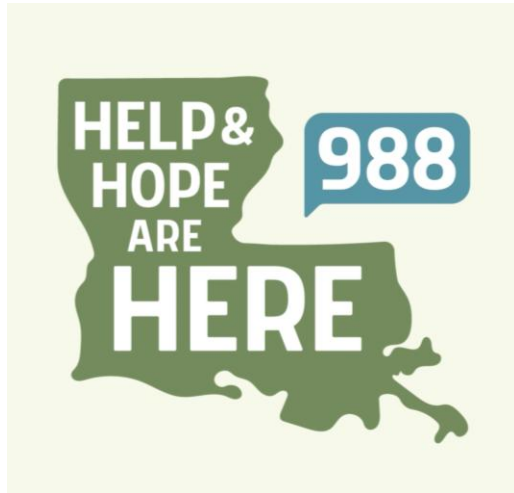
Post 2 (image)



If you’re going through something, this time of year can be tough. Everyone’s excited about the big game while you’re trying to manage some big emotions. 988 can help. Whether you’re feeling lonely, depressed, or just had a rough day, call or text “988” for free, confidential, emotional support. Or, chat online at Louisiana988.org.

[Download Assets](#)

Post 3 (video)



When life gets tough, 988 can help. The helpline provides free, emergency emotional support to Louisiana residents. Whether you had a tough day, are overwhelmed, or are having thoughts of suicide, 988 specialists are ready to help you through it.

You can:

-  Call
-  Text
-  Chat online

It's always confidential. Always supportive. And always available, 24/7. See more at louisiana988.org.

Post 4 (video)



Thousands of Louisianans reach out to the 988 helpline each month for free, immediate emotional support. Because life gets tough. And when it does, more and more of us are reaching out for support.

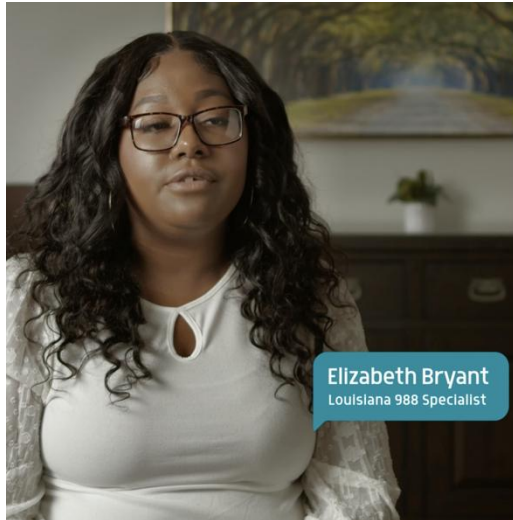
You can:

-  Call
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[Download Assets](#)

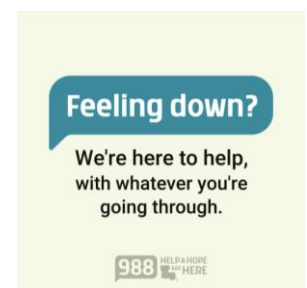
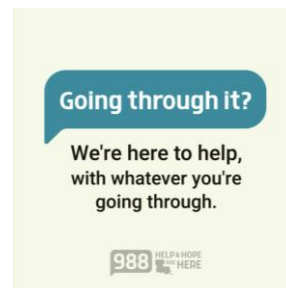
Post 5 (video)



Anytime you need emotional support, 988 specialists are here to help. They'll listen without judgment and help you work through whatever you're dealing with. Call, text, or chat online for free, confidential support, 24/7. See more at louisiana988.org.

Posts 6-9 (videos)

You can reach out to 988, Louisiana's emergency emotional support line, for help with problems of all types. Whether you had a tough day, are feeling overwhelmed, or have thoughts of suicide, 988 specialists are ready to help. See more at louisiana988.org.



[Download Assets](#)

Louisiana 988 Materials Generator

Connecting the people you serve with emotional support is now only a couple clicks away

The Louisiana 988 helpline provides 24/7, free and confidential emergency emotional support for mental health and substance use. Each state, including Louisiana, has a dedicated network of call centers staffed with mental health specialists who answer calls, texts, and chat messages from residents who reach out to 9-8-8 for support.

Louisiana 988 is a free resource providing equitable access to emergency emotional support for all Louisianans. You do not need insurance to contact 988. Services are also available to those who speak Spanish and other languages and to those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Louisiana 988 Materials Generator allows you to develop customized and tailored materials to connect your community with the emergency emotional support they need.

By answering just a few questions you can create customized materials, tailored to your community using evidence-based messaging and images of Louisiana residents. With this tool, you can create handouts, posters, and social media content, and can co-brand the materials with your organization's logo and contact information before easily downloading and printing the materials at your convenience. New material templates are being added all the time.

New!

As a part of Louisiana Department's Office of Behavioral Health's ongoing commitment to community engagement, we are always optimizing the Materials Generator to better fit the needs of Louisiana partners like you. Below are some of our newest optimizations:

- + New materials templates, including postcards and digital and vinyl billboards
- + New sector-specific materials templates
- + Images of rural and young adult Louisiana residents
- + Guidance and tips to streamline the printing process

Create your customized Louisiana 988 materials today at louisiana988.org/matgen

Don't see what you need? Let us know at helpdesk@forchange.agency

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Louisiana 988?

The 988 helpline provides immediate emotional and mental health support to Louisiana residents. The helpline is free, confidential and available 24/7.

What are the different ways I can contact 988?

You can call or text 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

Do I need insurance to contact 988?

No, you do not need insurance to contact 988. The service is free. If you need support connecting to other mental health, gambling, or substance use services in the community, contact 988 and we can help you find a provider who can work with you.

What happens when I reach out to 988?

When you contact 988, you will be immediately connected to a 988 specialist who will listen, provide support and connect you with local resources. The helpline is free, confidential and available 24/7. Most people receive the help they need, right in the moment.

What can I contact 988 about?

You can contact 988 for help with all types of problems. Whether you had a tough day, are overwhelmed, or are having thoughts of suicide, Louisiana 988 can help.

Some things people call about include stress, feeling overwhelmed, concerns about alcohol or drug use, feeling depressed, emotional response to mental and physical illness, help talking through money concerns, thoughts of suicide, and more.

You can reach out to 988 for yourself or for others you're concerned about.

Can you help me if I'm a service member, a veteran or part of a military family?

Yes. When you call 988, press 1 to access 988 specialists who focus on serving military members, veterans and their loved ones. Military and veteran-specific chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat) and text ([838255](https://text.988.org)) are also available.

Can I contact 988 for or about someone else?

Yes, the 988 helpline specialists provide caring support and resources for family, friends, caregivers, and advocates who reach out about another person they are concerned about.

Will you share my information with anyone if I contact 988?

No. 988 is safe and confidential and will not share your information. The helpline will only contact 911 if someone's life is in immediate danger. This is rare. Fewer than 1% of calls involve 911 without a caller's permission.

Does contacting 988 really help?

Yes, the helpline works. Numerous studies have shown that most callers are significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a 988 specialist. And most receive the help they need, right there on the call, and do not require any other services in that moment.

When should I contact 988 versus 911?

988 provides confidential, 24/7 and free emotional support. Contact 911 if you need EMS, fire or police dispatched to your location.

Will I be chatting with a bot?

No, you will never chat with a bot when you call, text or chat online with 988. You will always connect with another human who's ready to help.

To review a full list of Frequently Asked Questions or to learn more about 988, please visit Louisiana988.org.

What is 988 in Louisiana?

The 988 helpline provides emotional support to all Louisiana residents. Anyone who reaches out to 988 can expect immediate, safe support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The helpline is free, confidential and offers call, text, and online chat support.

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) is committed to ensuring everyone has access to quality emotional and mental health services — whether you're experiencing issues around anxiety, depression, gambling, alcohol or drugs, thoughts of suicide, or anything in between. Every Louisianan deserves that.

- + The 988 service is available in English and Spanish, with translation services in more than 250 languages. Text and chat are currently available in English.
- + Individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened can directly dial 988 on a videophone or click the "ASL Now" button on 988lifeline.org to connect with crisis counselors who can communicate in ASL and are trained in working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. TTY users can use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.
- + The chat feature is available through 988's website: Louisiana988.org. People are also encouraged to reach out to 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need immediate support.
- + Most callers report feeling significantly less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a specialist.

How Does 988 Work?

LDH's Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) has contracted with two certified call centers in Louisiana to answer 988 calls from state residents.

- + When you call, text or chat, you will quickly be connected to a specialist.
- + 988 has specialists available for service members, veterans, and their family members.
- + Your specialist will listen to you without judgment and help you reduce the intense feelings you may be dealing with.
- + Your specialist may connect you to local resources and longer-term support (like mental health professionals or drug or alcohol recovery services).

110,437

988 helpline calls
answered as of
June 2025

691

deaths by suicide in
Louisiana in 2023

1 in 5

adults live with a
mental health
condition

1 death

by suicide happens
every 11 minutes

How is LDH Promoting 988?

LDH has launched an integrated marketing campaign to raise awareness of 988 and reduce stigma surrounding depression or anxiety and drugs or alcohol.

- + LDH is committed to work with community partners including, mental health advocates and like-minded organizations, everyday influencers and universities across the state to help amplify messaging and awareness while promoting the 988 helpline.
- + In May 2023, LDH launched the [988 dashboard](#) to provide transparent access to key monthly in-state metrics including the volume of contacts by parish, overall broad demographics, and the type of assistance individuals are requesting. The data is aggregated and allows the caller to remain anonymous.

Please visit Louisiana988.org to learn more and access Louisiana 988 resources.

- + Click on [Media Resources](#) at the bottom of the page for brand logos, Zoom backgrounds, campaign ads, FAQs and 988 fact sheets
- + Click on [Partner Resources](#) for a 988 materials generator
- + Click on [What to Expect](#) to see a video of testimonials from 988 helpline specialists.



Is Here to Help



Free



Confidential



Available
24/7

RESOURCES

[Louisiana 988](#)

[988 Materials](#)

[LDH](#)

[Gambling Help](#)

